

Applying a Systematic Approach to Assessing and Educating the Board

By Lindsay Laug, Strategic Advisor, The Governance Institute

An excellent board is always growing and evolving, yet boards are unique in the fact that through these periods of growth and evolution, there are individual board members terming off, while new directors enter the boardroom eager to learn and contribute. The evolution, growth, and development is circular and centers around The Governance Institute's Intentional Governance Spectrum. A board will always be within a sector, maybe two to three sectors, of the spectrum due to the dynamic nature of a board.

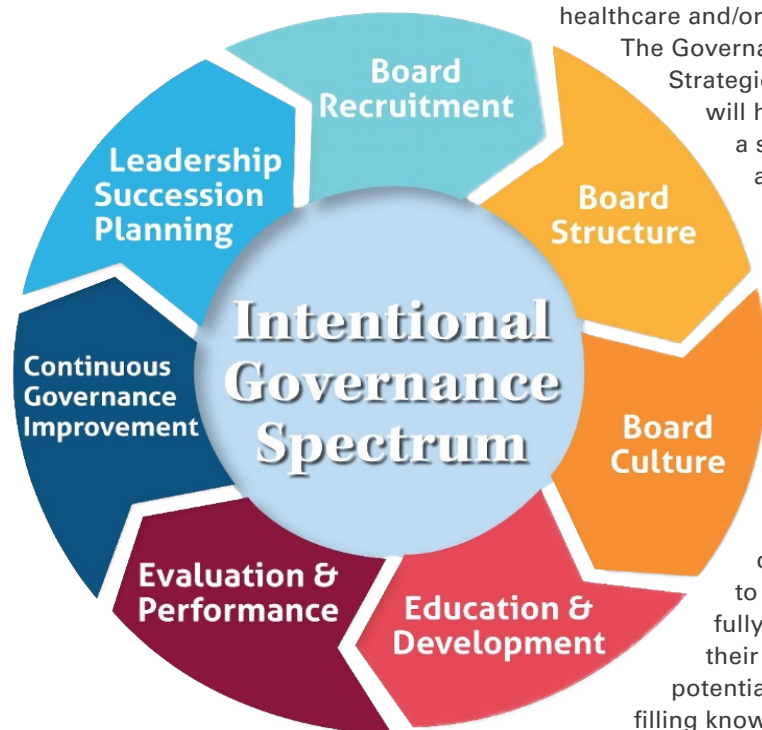
Recruiting board members can be challenging. But it is critical to focus on bringing in top talent—those who have the competencies and attributes needed to carry out your mission while guiding your strategy and vision. When recruiting board members for a specific competency, you may find gaps in other areas. These gaps can be narrowed or even closed by developing board members' knowledge and skills through ongoing education.

If boards or board members have gaps in their knowledge of healthcare and/or governance, The Governance Institute's Strategic Advisors will help you utilize a systematic approach to assess your board, pinpointing key area(s) of opportunity both individually and as a group, to ensure each director is able to contribute fully and reach their maximum potential. Beyond filling knowledge gaps,

it is also important to regularly assess the board's performance and fulfillment of its fiduciary duties and core responsibilities.

If your board is newly formed or recently restructured, new to The Governance Institute, and/or desires a new baseline on governance, the Member Profile and Good Governance Audit are a great place to start. The Member Profile takes stock of how your governance is structured, including who sits (and how many) on the board, which committees are in place, whether the board uses a consent agenda, how much time is devoted to strategic-level discussion, and how often and for how long boards meet. We can compare your profile against our biennial survey data and provide recommendations on structure, size, composition, and effective meeting practices. The Good Governance Audit focuses on The Governance Institute's list of recommended board practices and provides a starting point to look critically at which practices your board has or hasn't adopted, to prompt a generative discussion around why certain practices might not be in place but may be necessary or important to adopt.

If your board is on a continuous journey of improving governance, the BoardCompass Self-Assessment



is the best tool to garner full board insight on its performance and identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. Insight from your system and subsidiary boards, revealed by the BoardCompass tool, help shape the governance development plan(s) that align education and best practice resources to the items of focus.

Similarly, if your committees are striving to improve their specific work function, the Committee Assessment evaluates the work done at the committee level and identifies areas of strength and opportunities for development.

If your board seeks to understand competencies the board possesses in order to shape areas for future recruitment, desires to create individual development plans for members of your board, or utilizes data and board contribution for reappointment metrics, the Competency and Individual Board Member Assessments are excellent tools informing direction and individually tailored plans for development of future board leaders.

Key Board Takeaways

Questions for the board to consider include:

- What ongoing board education are we performing to narrow or close knowledge gaps?
- How do we currently assess the boards (both at the system and subsidiary level) and identify areas of opportunity and growth?
- How are the systems' committees performing? Do we evaluate our committees regularly to identify areas of strength and opportunities for development?
- What are we doing to ensure individual directors are improving their knowledge and able to meaningfully contribute to board discussion?

Through the analysis of each assessment, The Governance Institute's Strategic Advisors are able to extract high-performing items as well as areas of opportunity. Additional metrics considered in each analysis include the comparison to benchmarks, both national and internal. Strategic Advisors will outline observations, pose questions, and provide recommendations for each board. As initiatives are decided upon for focus, your Strategic Advisor will partner with you in order to align best practices, resources, and education to lead you on a journey

that will support your goals for governance and strategy.

The famous quote by Peter Drucker states, "What gets measured, gets done." Boards know this well—oversight of key metrics is a fundamental responsibility. Assessments are a key component in order to develop and strengthen the board and ultimately the vitality of your organization. Be sure to take full advantage of your membership and expertise of your service team who can guide and provide recommendations to appropriate tools for the needs of your unique board.

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